

House Democratic Leadership
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

House Democratic Leadership,

On November 6, 2018, the people of the United States elected an historic class of Democrats. In an election with significant turnout, the American people placed their faith in each of us, with the expectation that we will restore normal order, deliver results, and work towards a more perfect union.

As a whole, the more than sixty newly-elected Democratic Members comprise the most diverse class in our nation's history. We have the highest number of women ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, including our first Native American and Muslim women Members, the most LGBTQIA Members, and the largest incoming class of veterans in nearly a decade. More than two-thirds of our class were elected in Republican-held districts, demonstrating the importance of addressing concerns that cross party lines. Our incoming class will make up more than a quarter of the entire Democratic Caucus, representing the largest Democratic gains in the U.S. House of Representatives since Watergate.

We are a diverse group. Politically and ideologically, we have different views. But make no mistake, the undersigned are united in the belief that our class has a responsibility and mandate for change in the U.S. Congress. We are united in the belief that change means restoring a sense of integrity to the work of the U.S. Congress. We are united in the belief that all people, regardless of background or circumstance, deserve a fair shake -- no more, but no less. We are united in the belief that whatever the differences we may have with our Republican colleagues, it is our solemn responsibility to debate and pass legislation that improves the lives of those who elected us. And despite how the media may focus on our differences, we are united in the belief that the diversity of our Caucus makes us stronger, not weaker.

For the success of the 116th Congress, the undersigned therefore urge our leadership to adopt the following approaches:

On the legislative agenda, we must heed the call from our constituents. While we have a duty to exercise oversight over the Executive Branch, particularly when the Administration crosses legal lines or contravenes American values, we must prioritize action on topics such as the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs, our crumbling infrastructure, immigration, gun safety, the environment, and criminal justice reform. In order to maximize progress on these topics, many of the undersigned have already called for a comprehensive anti-corruption and campaign finance

reform bill to be the first item addressed by the 116th Congress. While we may not always agree on how to approach every issue, we are united in the belief that we have a mandate to debate, draft, and work across the aisle to pass legislation. In order to ensure that the legislative priorities of our constituents are heard, even as the junior-most Members of the Caucus, we request monthly meetings with the Speaker, Majority Leader, and Whip, on the legislative priorities of this incoming class.

On committee representation, we respectfully request that members of our incoming class be assigned to the exclusive committees of Appropriations, Rules, Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Financial Services. The voters have asked for our voices to be heard, and to do that, this class must be a driving force in drafting legislation with far-reaching economic implications for the country. For the Steering and Policy Committee of the Democratic Caucus, which determines committee assignments and helps determine both the message and messengers of the Democratic Caucus, we request that our incoming class be represented by two elected first-term members, instead of one. And in order to expand transparency of the work of the U.S. Congress to the American people, we ask that leadership consider holding Committee hearings outside of Washington whenever possible. Citizens across the country should have the opportunity to attend hearings that impact their lives.

On changing internal rules, we respectfully request that in the spirit of transparency and common sense, bills be available for review 72 hours before they can proceed to a vote. Members on both sides of the aisle need adequate time to actually read the legislation that they will be voting on. In an effort to prevent continued legislative gridlock, and to move legislation that has broad support, we ask that a bill that receives 290 cosponsors be prioritized for floor consideration by Democratic Leadership. To expand those who can introduce legislation that gets to the floor, we ask that committees hold regular, scheduled hearings where all Members -- regardless of their tenure or position -- are able to publicly provide their legislative proposals in an open setting. Given our desire to get to work quickly, we ask that every Committee designate a Member Services staff member to help new Members increase our immediate effectiveness.

We also ask that Congressional schedules are established well in advance and to every extent possible, are adhered to. As we were elected based on our increased accessibility and our promise to make Washington work for everyday Americans, it is imperative that we be able to travel home reliably for planned events in our districts. Having a set calendar will facilitate the necessary balance between our Washington, home district, and personal obligations, enabling all Members to be more effective lawmakers and representatives.

We are united in our belief that the 116th Congress, and the American people we were elected to represent, will be better served by these changes. We look forward to discussing these requests with Leadership at the earliest possible date.

Signed:

1. Colin Allred
2. Cindy Axne
3. Anthony Brindisi
4. Ed Case
5. Sean Casten
6. Gilbert Cisneros
7. Angie Craig
8. Jason Crow
9. Joe Cunningham
10. Sharice Davids
11. Antonio Delgado
12. Abby Finkenauer
13. Josh Harder
14. Katie Hill
15. Steven Horsford
16. Chrissy Houlahan
17. Andy Kim
18. Susie Lee
19. Andy Levin
20. Mike Levin
21. Elaine Luria
22. Tom Malinowski
23. Ben McAdams
24. Lucy McBath
25. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
26. Joe Neguse
27. Chris Pappas
28. Dean Phillips
29. Katie Porter
30. Max Rose
31. Harley Rouda
32. Mary Gay Scanlon
33. Dr. Kim Schrier
34. Donna Shalala
35. Mikie Sherrill
36. Elissa Slotkin
37. Xochitl Torres Small
38. Abigail Spanberger
39. Greg Stanton
40. Haley Stevens
41. Rashida Tlaib
42. Lori Trahan
43. David Trone
44. Lauren Underwood
45. Jennifer Wexton
46. Susan Wild